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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KABILA'S DECEMBER 20 MEETING
WITH P-3 PLUS 2 AMBASSADORS AND MONUC

¶1. (SBU) President Joseph Kabila received the P-3 plus 2 ambassadors/charges at his residence on December 20. The meeting was called with 15 minutes' notice, officially in response to a request made several weeks earlier to discuss military operations in North Kivu. Topics covered included the fighting in North Kivu, the upcoming Kivus conference on Peace, Stability and Development, human rights, and the November 10 Nairobi communique. The meeting was largely unremarkable except for interventions by Defense Minister Chihez Diemu, whose criticisms of the UK ambassador and MONUC were personal and impolitic. Another surprise was a statement by the South African charge that a special envoy sent recently to North Kivu to negotiate Nkunda's exile had been arrested by Congolese authorities and then taken to Kinshasa before he was released. Kabila apologized for the mistake and asked for better coordination in the future. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) At 4:45 pm on December 20, P-3 plus 2 ambassadors were summoned to the President Kabila's office at the presidential residence for a meeting at 5:00 pm. The meeting, which did not begin until 5:45, was attended by the ambassadors of the U.S., Belgium, and the UK, and by the charges d'affaires of South Africa and France. SRSG William Swing, in Goma, was represented by MONUC's acting polchief. In addition to Kabila, GDRC participants included Defense Minister Chihez Diemu, Interior Minister Denis Kalume, Foreign Affairs Minister Antipas Mbusa, Presidential Chief of Staff Raymond Tshibanda, and presidential foreign affairs advisor Marcellin Chissambo.

¶3. (SBU) Note: The meeting had been requested by SRSG Swing on behalf of the P-3 plus 2 in early December, shortly after the GDRC launched a military offensive against Nkunda. Just prior to the meeting participants decided that, in Swing's absence, Belgian ambassador Johann Swinnen, the most senior among the three ambassadors present, would open the meeting (Swing's role) with a short statement on behalf of the P-3 plus 2. End note.

¶4. (SBU) Kabila began, explaining that his very busy schedule had prevented him from holding the meeting until now. He then invited ambassadors to speak. Swinnen went through a list of "concerns" since the group last met, in Goma, in November. He mentioned the fighting in Kivu, the Kivus Conference, the Nairobi communique, and human rights and impunity. With regard to human rights, he praised the November 24 "Day Against Gender Based Violence" in Bukavu that was organized by MONUC and the GDRC and hosted by First Lady Olive Kabila.

¶5. UK ambassador spoke next, expressing support for the views put forward by Swinnen and asking if, given recent setbacks in the fight against Nkunda, the GDRC would be able to undertake a military campaign against the FDLR by March 15 pursuant to its commitments

under the Nairobi communique. U.S. ambassador voiced strong support for the Kivus Conference and congratulated GDRC for the decision to use this approach as a way to resolve the conflict in the eastern Congo. French charge endorsed the holding of the Conference, and affirmed his government's willingness to support it. He also asked for greater information about the toll on the civilian population resulting from recent fighting in North Kivu. MONUC rep noted that his organization was prepared to support the Conference with logistics and security arrangements.

¶16. Kabila summarized participants' concerns: (1) military developments; (2) the Kivus Conference; and (3) the humanitarian crisis. On military developments, Kabila noted that although a decision had been made to move forward with the Conference, the military option "remained on the table." Hence, the FARDC continued to send reinforcements and to re-supply its troops. He stated that in furtherance of its commitments in Nairobi, the GRDC had put forward a plan on the FDLR, including awareness-raising and cantonment by January 15, and military action by March 15. GDRC commitment to Nairobi had not changed, he asserted.

¶17. (SBU) On the Conference, Kabila noted that plans to hold the event were stuck for a long time, acknowledging that much time had been lost. He briefly reviewed the Conference's three themes -- peace, stability, and development -- noting that great progress was being made to adequately address all three themes. He ended by noting that just prior to the P-3 plus 2 meeting he had signed the executive order convening the Conference. He then asked Interior Minister Kalume to brief participants on the Conference. Kalume went into detail on the history of the Conference idea but provided little detail on current plans for the event. When pressed for specifics, he would not address cost estimates, numbers of persons expected to attend, meeting format, etc. as these matters were the

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domain of the Technical Committee.

¶18. (SBU) Defense Minister Chikez spoke next. Visibly upset and barely able to control his anger, he launched a personal attack against the British ambassador who had "dared" to ask if the GDRC was still able to launch an attack against the FDLR come March 15. Chikez asserted that the FDLR had not attacked once in four years and that the only problem in North Kivu was Nkunda, supported by Rwanda, the same country whose oppression had created the problem of the FDLR. He said the UK ambassador had no compassion for the people of North Kivu and had shown callous disregard for the brave soldiers of the FARDC. He also attacked MONUC, claiming that DPKO officials in New York had ordered MONUC to withhold support for the FDLR in its fight against Nkunda despite promises given to the GDRC that it would take offensive action against Nkunda. "MONUC has to be courageous," he stated. (Note: At a breakfast with the U.S. ambassador the following morning Chikez was only slightly contrite, asserting that the British had never cared about the interests of the Congolese people. End note.)

¶19. (SBU) Foreign Minister Mbusa then addressed diplomatic developments. He referred to meetings in New York, Nairobi, and Addis Ababa, noting that great progress had been made over the past few months. "We are near a solution" he stated several times, emphasizing that the Government had high expectations for the upcoming Conference. He also praised the international community for its efforts and asked for continued support.

¶110. (SBU) The South African charge asked Kabila if the GDRC was still willing to allow Nkunda to go into exile. He said the question was important because a special South African envoy who had traveled recently (no dates were given) to Goma to negotiate an exile agreement with Nkunda had been arrested and brought to Kinshasa for interrogation. Kabila replied that exile was still an option apologized for the "misunderstanding," asking that the South African Government coordinate with his government its overtures to Nkunda the next time it sends a special envoy to the DRC. (Note: The South African diplomat's revelations caused surprise, as others present apparently had not heard about this incident. End note.)

¶111. (SBU) As the meeting ended the issue of attendance at the

Conference was raised. Kabila stated emphatically that Nkunda's political organization (the CNDP) would be officially invited to the Conference, but that Nkunda himself would not be allowed to attend. "He will be arrested the moment he sets foot in Goma," Kabila stated. Kabila also made clear that the Conference was for Congolese citizens only, thereby dismissing out of hand FDLR participation.

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